

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 9
Issue No. 2
April, 2006
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Fourth Annual Meeting 2006 Highlights



Mark Haase, Judy Lang and Robert L. Johnson II hang the new CoDR banner.



Art Greve III (L) told about his experience with CoDR at NCCF and his father, Art Greve II told those in attendance about the importance of keeping this ministry alive and well inside the prisons.



Tom Warner and Robert Johnson talk over "old times" remembering their time together at FDCF.



Isaiah Warner, the youngest to attend.

2006

4th Annual Meeting

The 2006 Annual Meeting of the Church of the Damascus Road was held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on Sunday, January 22, 2006 at 4pm. After some brief introductions, a delicious meal was served at 4:30pm. After the meal the Annual Report was reviewed, including some testimonials of former members who could not attend.

Persons who attended came from such places as Des Moines, Lytton, Carroll, Emmetsburg, Remsen, Humboldt, Marshalltown, Council Bluffs, Newton, Badger, Algona, Storm Lake, Corwith, Manson, and several from Fort Dodge.



Past & Present Presidents: Mark Haase (L), former member of CoDR at NCCF succeeds Dick Hersom (above), First Presbyterian Church in Fort Dodge, Iowa, who has served on the Outside Church Council for three years, two as president. Mark has been on the OCC for four years, and is a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran in Humboldt, IA. Mark was elected in January just before the Annual Mtg.

The highlight of the evening is when we were treated to testimonials from former members and also from other persons in attendance, telling us how CoDR has impacted their lives in a positive way.



Tom and Regina Warner and their family.



Mark Haase, Darwin VanHauen, Derrick Griffith, Pastor Carroll Lang, Tom Warner, and Robert L. Johnson II

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Dennis and Candace Booth, Jim and Marilyn Fevold.



Pam Hamilton, Art Greve III, Mary Jo & Art Greve II

The Smell of Rain

A cold March wind danced around the dead of night in Dallas as the doctor walked into the small hospital room of Diana Blessing. Still groggy from surgery, her husband David held her hand as they braced themselves for the latest news. That afternoon of March 10, 1991 complications had forced Diana, only 24-weeks pregnant, to undergo an emergency cesarean to deliver the couple's new daughter, Dana Lu Blessing. At 12 inches long and weighing only one pound and nine ounces, they already knew she was perilously premature. Still, the doctor's soft words dropped like bombs. "I don't think she's going to make it," he said, as kindly as he could. "There's only a 10-percent chance she will live through the night, and even then, if by some slim chance she does make it, her future could be a very cruel one". Numb with disbelief, David and Diana listened as the doctor described the devastating problems Dana would likely face if she survived. She would never walk, she would never talk, she would probably be blind, and she would certainly be prone to other catastrophic conditions from cerebral palsy to complete mental retardation, and on and on.

"No! No!" was all Diana could say.

She and David, with their 5-year-old son Dustin, had long dreamed of the day they would have a daughter to become a family of four. Now, within a matter of hours, that dream was slipping away. Through the dark hours of morning as Dana held onto life by the thinnest thread, Diana slipped in and out of sleep, growing more and more determined that their tiny daughter would live, and live to be a healthy, happy young girl. But David, fully awake and listening to additional dire details of their daughter's chances of ever leaving the hospital alive, much less healthy, knew he must confront his wife with the inevitable. David walked in and said that we needed to talk about making funeral arrangements. Diana remembers she felt so bad for him because he was doing everything and trying to include her in what was going on, but she just wouldn't listen. She *couldn't* listen. She said, "No, that's not going to happen, no way! I don't care what the doctors say. Dana is not going to die! One day she will be just fine and she will be coming home with us!"

As if willed to live by Diana's determination, Dana clung to life hour after hour with the help of every medical machine and marvel her miniature body could endure. But as those first days passed, a new agony set in for David and Diana. Because Dana's underdeveloped nervous system was essentially 'raw,' the lightest kiss or caress only intensified her discomfort, so they couldn't even cradle their tiny baby girl against their chests to offer the strength of their love. All they could do, as Dana struggled alone beneath the ultraviolet light in the tangle of tubes and wires, was to pray that God would stay close to their precious little girl. As the weeks went by, she did slowly gain an ounce of weight here and an ounce of strength there. At last, when Dana turned two months old, her parents were able to hold her in their arms for the very first time. And two months later, though doctors continued to gently but grimly warn that her chances of surviving, much less living any kind of normal life, were next to zero. Dana went home from the hospital, just as her mother had predicted.

Today, five years later, Dana is a petite but feisty young girl with glittering gray eyes and an unquenchable zest for life. She shows no signs, whatsoever, of any mental or physical impairment. Simply, she is everything a little girl can be and more, but that happy ending is far from the end of her story.

One blistering afternoon in the summer of 1996 near her home in Irving, Texas, Dana was sitting on her mother's lap in the bleachers of a local ball park where her brother Dustin's baseball team was practicing. As always, Dana was chattering nonstop with her mother and several other adults sitting nearby when she suddenly fell silent. Hugging her arms across her chest, Dana asked, "Do you smell that?"

Smelling the air and detecting the approach of a thunderstorm, Diana replied, "Yes, it smells like rain."

Dana closed her eyes and again asked, "Do you smell that?"

Once again, her mother replied, "Yes, I think we're about to get wet, it smells like rain."

Still caught in the moment, Dana shook her head, patted her thin shoulders with her small hands and loudly announced, "No, it smells like Him. It smells like God when you lay your head on His chest."

Tears blurred Diana's eyes as Dana then happily hopped down to play with the other children. Before the rains came, her daughter's words confirmed what Diana and all the members of the extended Blessing family had known, at least in their hearts, all along. During those long days and nights of her first two months of her life, when her nerves were too sensitive for them to touch her, God was holding Dana on His chest and it is His loving scent that she remembered so well.

A Little Wisdom

The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt within the heart.

-Helen Keller



Proper Breads

On the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, there is a ceremony called Tashlich. Jews traditionally go to a body of water such as the ocean, a stream or a river to pray and throw in bread crumbs. This symbolizes throwing away one's sins, which the fish devour.

Occasionally, people ask what kinds of bread crumbs should be thrown. Here are suggestions for breads which may be most appropriate for specific sins and misbehaviors...

- For ordinary sins - White bread
- For erotic sins - French bread
- For particularly dark sins - Pumpernickel
- For complex sins - Multi grain
- For sins of indecision - Waffles
- For sins committed in haste - Matzos
- For sins of chutzpah - Any fresh bread
- For substance abuse - Stoned wheat
- For petty larceny - Stollen
- For committing auto theft - Caraway
- For timidity/cowardice - Milk toast
- For ill-temperedness - Sourdough
- For silliness, eccentricity - Nut bread
- For jingoism, chauvinism - Yankee Doodles
- For excessive irony - Rye bread
- For unnecessary chances - Hero bread
- For war mongering - Kaiser rolls
- For dressing immodestly - Tarts
- For lechery and promiscuity - Hot buns
- For promiscuity with gentiles - Hot cross buns
- For racist attitudes - Crackers
- For being holier than thou - Bagels
- For overeating - Stuffing
- For indecent photography - Cheesecake
- For raising your voice too often - Challah
- For pride and egotism - Puff pastry
- For sycophancy, a.-kissing - Brownies
- For being overly smothering - Angel food cake
- For trashing the environment - Dumplings
- For telling bad jokes/puns - Corn bread

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The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the correctional facilities at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Rev. Carroll Lang, Pastor
Gene D. Cook, Jr., Editor

Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list may send name, address, and phone numbers to The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or by e-mail at: DamascusCh@aol.com. The Flash will be sent directly to your home.

Office at St. Olaf Lutheran Church
239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge, IA

BAPTISMS



FDCF

Baptism:

- Durand McGowen (2/1/06)
- Chris Stein & Aaron Bury (2/15/06)
- Jeff Sandidge (3/15/06)
- Nathaniel Ward (3/29/06)

Affirmation of Baptism:

- Nicholas Lavin(3/15/06)
- Peter Lickteig(3/15/06)
- Victorio DeLance(3-29-06)

Bumper Stickers

The best mathematical equation ever given: 1 cross + 3 nails= 4 given.

Faith costs, but lack of faith costs even more.



Stefani A. Reinald Hernandez 574518 D

A Letter from Stephanie

Hello, Dear Sponsors,
I am happy that I can write to you. I'd like to tell you that I have gotten good grades in school and I have had a good behavior. I like playing hide and seek with my brother. The capital of Chile is Santiago, but I live in the city of Valparaiso (arrow). Our country exports copper, wood, salmon and fruit. Chile has deserts, valleys, mountains, beaches and forests. School starts at 8am and my favorite class is Language. My teacher's name is Migel Corodine. I love to sing. I'd like to thank you for the help and the affection that you have given to me. Thank you for helping me. Goodbye to you all with love and hugs.

Stephanie Reynalds Hernandez

CoDR Art Contest

The Church of the Damascus Road is soliciting art entries for this year's Donor-Partner Print. Entries need to be submitted to Pastor Lang. The Outside Church Council will choose one to use and make arrangements with the winning artist to publish his artwork (unused artwork will be returned). The winner will receive a study bible.



Enter to win

Artists should develop their artwork to depict what The Church of the Damascus Road has meant to them or what CoDR can mean for others.

The winning artwork will be distributed as prints to donors who give \$100 or more to CoDR. It's a wonderful way for inmates to have an impact on how the people in Iowa view prison ministry.

The Symbols of Easter

Christianity has many symbols; the most recognizable is, of course, the cross. There are a number of symbols linked with Easter or the Resurrection: the butterfly, the lily, the pomegranate, the phoenix and the peacock.

The butterfly represents the Resurrection and eternal life. It emerges from its cocoon or chrysalis and gloriously rises into the sky in its splendid new body. Similarly, Jesus and his followers are born into a new life on Easter.

The lily is perhaps the most common Easter symbol because it's displayed during Easter worship services and blooms around this time each year. The lily's bulb decays in the earth, yet new life sprouts from it in the form of a flower-reminiscent of the new life that emerged from the tomb so many years ago.

The pomegranate is used as a symbol of the power of Christ and his Resurrection because of the many seeds that burst forth from the fruit. These seeds represent the many believers who follow Christ. They also represent the magnificence of divine grace and the fertility of the Word.

The peacock sheds his feathers annually. Each year the feathers grow back more beautiful and more brilliant in color. This renewal symbolizes eternal life or resurrection. There's also a myth that the peacock's flesh doesn't decay after death-immortality. (The peacock is sometimes used to represent human vanity, because of the way he proudly struts and displays his plumage.)

The phoenix was a mythical bird that lived in the Arabian Desert for five hundred years. It set its own nest on fire and perished in the flames. But on the third day it rose from its own ashes and ascended into the sky as a new and beautiful creature. It's easy to see why the phoenix represents immortal life and the Resurrection.

Special Dates

- Daylight-Savings Time begins, April 2, '06
- Palm Sunday, April 9, 2006
- Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2006
- Good Friday, April 14, 2006 (We will be showing "Passion of the Christ" in the chapel at 6:00 P.M. at FDCF and at 6:00 on April 12th at NCCF)
- Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006 (We will have a service at 8:30 A.M. in the VR.)

The Church of the Damascus Road
 PO Box 834
 Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

April 2006

Invite the Pastor to Worship

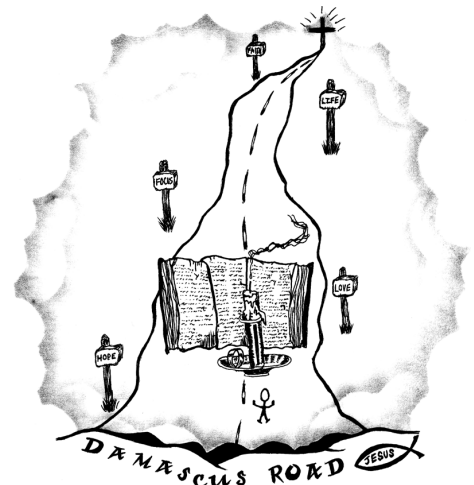
The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on week-nights for two reasons. One is to enable people on the outside to worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. The second is to make the pastor of Damascus Road available to visit area congregations on Sunday mornings. The pastor can give a brief update on the ministry, a sermon, a children's sermon, an adult forum, a children's Sunday school opening, a cross-generational class session, or any or all of the above, and is open to suggestions. All that is asked is that there be time to prepare.

Call 515-955-3579 or write to: The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or by e-mail at <DamascusCh@aol.com> to arrange for a visit to your congregation. The pastor speaks Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Covenant, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, Assembly of God, Mennonite, Nazarene, and a host of other denominations, independent, and non-denominational, too.

Artists' Corner



Deandre Jackson(NCCF 2005)



Victorio Delance (FDCF 2006)



<http://www.dodgenet.com/~cjl/ang/index.html>

All Readers: Send Contributions

The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS, inside and outside to send in articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

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A note to secretaries and pastors—

Copy Me, Please!

We send our newsletter primarily to congregations. It's printed on white paper so it can be copied to include all or portions of it in your newsletter or bulletin, or simply made available to members of your congregation.

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge
 7:00pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
 6:30pm Fridays Prayer Team
 7:00pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City
 6:30pm Tuesdays Bible Study
 6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion